

# **Solano County Child and Family Services**

## **System Improvement Plan**

**Prepared by Solano County Health and  
Social Services Department**

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# System Improvement Plan

## Table of Contents

I. Background .....	3
II. Purpose and Structure of the System Improvement Plan (SIP).....	3
III. Contributors to the System Improvement Plan .....	4
IV. Data Collection Techniques and Findings .....	5
A. Focus Groups and Surveys .....	6
B. Solano County Child and Family Services Self Assessment.....	6
C. Solano County Child and Family Services System Improvement Plan .....	7
D. Input from Biological Parents.....	7
E. Issue Identification and SIP Integration .....	7
V. System Improvement Plan Work Plan .....	10
Attachment 1: Self Assessment Summary	
Attachment 2: System Improvement Plan Participants	

## **I. Background**

The Solano County Child Welfare Services System Improvement Plan (SIP) focuses on areas for improvement identified in the Self Assessment completed in June of 2004. The improvement process was initiated in 2000 with widespread consensus that California could do a better job of providing for the safety and well-being of its most vulnerable children and families – those at risk of abuse or neglect. As a result, the California Legislature and Governor Davis enacted legislation (AB 1740) to convene a Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group. The group was charged to complete an unprecedented review of the state's Child Welfare System (CWS) and to develop recommendations for its improvement.

Further legislation was passed in 2001. AB 636 established a California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR) system to evaluate county systems and assist counties in meeting outcomes.<sup>1</sup> AB 636 mandates a process of continual system improvement for county child welfare services and has three components: the Self Assessment (SA), the System Improvement Plan (SIP) and the Peer Quality Case Review System (PQCR).

Solano County completed the Child Welfare Services Self Assessment in June 2004. The Self Assessment was guided by a Self Assessment Advisory Group, which included County Child Welfare Services staff, Probation staff and other county and community stakeholders.

The Self-Assessment includes an analysis of the county's demographics and its performance on a number of state and federal outcome indicators. It also contains an environmental scan of child welfare services, both within public agencies and in the community and an assessment of systemic factors, which promote or hinder service excellence. Finally, it reviews the programmatic strengths and those areas needing improvement and suggests the priority focus areas to be addressed in this County System Improvement Plan (SIP).

## **II. Purpose and Structure of the System Improvement Plan (SIP)**

As indicated above, the County System Improvement Plan (SIP) is one of three key component of the C-CSFR. Updated on an annual basis, the SIP is the operational agreement between Solano County and the State outlining how the County will improve its system of care for children and youth and forms an important part of the system for reporting on progress toward meeting agreed upon improvement goals using the C-CSFR outcomes and indicators.

The Solano County SIP focuses on improving two outcomes, which were identified in the Self Assessment to be in most need of improvement:

- Children are maintained safely in their homes whenever possible and appropriate, and
- Children will have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing reentry to foster care.

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<sup>1</sup> In California, each county administers its own child welfare program, with state oversight.

Five goals have been selected by Solano County to measure progress towards these outcomes. For each goal, strategies (and rationales for adopting each strategy) have been identified. The milestones, timeframes and individuals responsible for each strategy are the body of the work plan.

**Improvement Goal 1:** Increase to 90% the percentage of cases in which face-to-face contact with a child occurs, or is attempted, within the 10-day response time required by regulation.

**Improvement Goal 2:** Increase the percentage of children who are visited by a Social Worker on a monthly basis to 90%.

**Improvement Goal 3:** Increase the proportion of children who exit foster care to reunification within 12 months to 38%.

**Improvement Goal 4:** Reduce the rate of foster care re entry to 7.5%.

**Improvement Goal 5:** Increase the number of children adopted within 24 months to 30%.

### **III. Contributors to the System Improvement Plan**

A diverse group of staff and community stakeholders, who comprised the Self-Assessment Advisory Group, was invited to continue their involvement in the development of the SIP. Participants in the System Improvement Plan included county staff from a variety of disciplines, and community members from multiple community based organizations, as well as biological parents.

#### **Core Representatives:**

- CWS administrators, managers and social workers
- Probation Administrators
- Foster Parents: Solano County Foster Parent Association; Foster & Kinship Care Foundation – Solano College

#### **Mandated Contributors:**

- Children's Mental Health
- Youth and Family Services
- Children's Youth Support Network
- Children and Parent Representatives: Biological Parents; Attorneys representing parents; Attorneys representing children
- Juvenile Court Bench Officer: Juvenile Judges; Family Law Commissioners; Court Officers; County Counsel's staff
- County Office of Education
- Community Based Organizations: The Children's Network; Aspira Foster and Family Services; Foster A Dream; With Loving Care, Inc.

**Other Participants:**

The following local planning bodies and organizations provided input into both the Self Assessment and the System Improvement Plan:

**CalWORKS:** The CalWORKs program and the Child Welfare Services program are co-located in the Solano County Health and Social Services Department. The partnership was formed to help young parents achieve economic stability and child safety through coordinated and family-focused services. Coordination maximizes the use of staffing, funding, facilities and other resources and reduces the duplication of casework efforts, promoting the direct involvement of families in the development of their case plans.

**The Child Abuse Prevention Council:** formed by the Solano County Board of Supervisors in 1998, the Council consists of 34 members, appointed by the Board. They represent a broad range of disciplines, professions, organizations and individuals working to prevent and treat child abuse, and to promote public awareness.

**Mental Health Services Collaboration** is an effective coordination between CWS and Mental Health Services. The co-location of mental health staff at CWS, who work closely with the CWS staff, has been particularly successful.

**Public Health Collaboration** entails monthly meetings with the Public Health Nurses and CWS staff to review and collaborate on cases.

**Responsible Fathers Program:** part of CalWORKS Family Enrichment Services, Responsible Fathers is a comprehensive program of services designed to encourage responsible fatherhood.

**Black Infant Health Advisory Board:** Established in 1992, the mission of the BIH Advisory Board is to reduce infant mortality rates in African American families by providing strategies to reduce barriers to care and advocacy around health issues. Among the goals are to involve African-American fathers in the care, nurturing and parenting of African-American children.

#### **IV. Data Collection Techniques and Findings**

In addition to outcome data published by the California Department of Social Services, data was collected in the following venues to help Solano County evaluate practices such as customer service, family assessment, case planning and service delivery.

#### **IV. A. Focus Groups and Surveys**

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In 2003, as part of the Redesign Process, 19 focus groups with 158 participants<sup>2</sup> were conducted with parents (including parents in detention facilities), foster parents, foster teens, community based professionals, Community Mental Health services staff, and the CalWORKS/CWS Partnership staff. A survey of 102 foster teen youth was also completed.

The qualitative data was summarized in the Solano County Child Welfare System Redesign Stakeholders Report, completed in November 2003. Community feedback was summarized in five key messages, which were voiced consistently across stakeholder groups.

- **Community Message 1:** Families are challenged by not having basic needs met, such as housing and jobs. These challenges create tremendous stress in their lives.
- **Community Message 2:** Families want more affordable and free family recreation programs in their neighborhoods.
- **Community Message 3:** There is a lack of trust in the child welfare system. Families want earlier response before a crisis occurs or before treatment is mandated.
- **Community Message 4:** Families want support and help working with their children, particularly teens.
- **Community Message 5:** Participants in the community involvement process want feedback on the decisions and changes that are made to the child welfare system.

#### **IV. B. Solano County Child and Family Services Self Assessment**

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In May and June 2004, Solano County Child Welfare Services convened the Managers and Supervisors and the Community Advisory Group to provide input on the Self Assessment. In a series of 6 meetings, participants focused on reviewing the data, outcomes and systemic factors impacting the delivery of services to families and children. The meeting schedule is summarized below:

- May 4, 2004: CWS administrators, managers and social workers
- May 5, 2004: Community Advisory Committee
- May 18, 2004: Interagency meeting including Children's Mental Health; the County Office of Education; Probation
- May 28, 2004; Juvenile Judge; Family Law Commissioners, Court Officer, County Counsel, attorneys representing parents, attorneys representing children.
- June 8, 2004: CWS administrators, managers and social workers
- June 8, 2004: Community Advisory Committee

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<sup>2</sup> 75 service providers, 83 parents. Over 75% of participants were women. Service providers were primarily white, while parent demographics were 34% Latino, 32% African American, 28% white and 6% other.

#### **IV. C. Solano County Child and Family Services System Improvement Plan**

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In August and September 2004, Solano County Child Welfare Services reconvened the Managers and Supervisors and the Community Advisory Group to provide input on the outcomes that were chosen as focus areas for improvement. In a series of 4 meetings, participants provided input on the county's current performance, identified improvement goals and milestones to meet the goals.

The SIP meeting schedule is summarized below:

- August 24, 2004: CWS administrators, managers and social workers
- August 24, 2004: Community Advisory Committee
- September 14, 2004: CWS administrators, managers and social workers
- September 14, 2004: Community Advisory Committee
- September, 2004: A series of one on one interviews with four biological parents (3 mothers and 1 father)

#### **IV. D. Input from Biological Parents**

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The QI/QA Manager interviewed four biological parents (three mothers and a father) as their children entered the Child Welfare system asking if each would review the suggestions for improvement from the Self Assessment and offer input and/or additional suggestions. The parents approved the planned improvements and particularly favored the plan to work towards more options for parents to enter residential treatment programs while children remained in their custody. Three of the parents also suggested that children be placed with relatives rather than in foster care in the belief that such placements would support a faster and more successful reunification process.

Input from the Child Welfare System Redesign, the Advisory Groups for the Self Assessment and the System Improvement Plan, and one-on-one interviews with biological parents informed the development process for the SIP work plan, as described in the table which follows.

#### **IV.E. Issue Identification and SIP Integration**

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<b>Key</b>	<b>Information Source</b>	<b>Year</b>
CWS/MS	Child Welfare Services Managers and Supervisors	2004
CA	Community Advisors	2004
BP	Feedback from Biological Parents	2004
FRC/FG	Family Resource Center Focus Groups	2003
FTS	Foster Teen Survey	2003

<b>Issue Identified</b>	<b>Identified By</b>	<b>How this has been integrated into the SIP</b> <i>Note: the specific strategies and milestones are in parenthesis and can be found in the work plan</i>
Chronic staff shortages and heavy workloads were frequently cited	CWS/MS, CA	Several strategies relate to this finding, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing stronger recruitment and</li></ul>

Issue Identified	Identified By	How this has been integrated into the SIP <i>Note: the specific strategies and milestones are in parenthesis and can be found in the work plan</i>
as root factors in poor performance in several outcomes, including timely response to referrals requiring 10-day response and length of time to adoption.		<p>retention plans in coordination with Human Resources (1.c)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing and implementing pilot strategies to work more efficiently, such as moving responsibility for the jurisdictional report from emergency response to the court unit. (1.a.1). The pilot system for processing the dispositional reports has been designed to minimize the amount of time required to product court documents in the emergency response unit.</li> <li>• Identifying and securing outside grant funding to support additional staff (1.b)</li> <li>• Initiate concurrent planning earlier in the process (5.b).</li> </ul>
Although staff recognizes the importance of increased data to measure strengths and areas for improvement, the data produced in CWS/CMS does not accurately reflect performance because of variations in how data is entered, and how certain fields are used.	CWS/MS	<p>Milestones have been established regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely &amp; accurate data entry (2.a.1 and 2.a.2)</li> <li>• CWS/CMS data entry (2.a.4).</li> <li>• Internal recognition for data accuracy (2.a.6)</li> <li>• Use of Safe Measures (2.a.8)</li> </ul>
Data collected during the Self Assessment further confirmed the racial differentials in child abuse referrals and cases. Solano County has begun to look for an explanation as to why this occurs here.	CWS/MS, FRC/FG	A workgroup is assigned to try to assess the reasons for overrepresentation of African American children in the foster care system and to determine what approach might address the fairness and equity issue (3.c.).

Issue Identified	Identified By	How this has been integrated into the SIP
Services to Spanish-speaking families are lacking, both to address calls from Spanish-speaking reporters and for support services, which are available to Spanish speakers. In conjunction with this increased number of referrals of Hispanic families, the number of families receiving services has begun to rise, as has the number of Hispanic children in foster case.	CWS/MS, FRC/FG (Latino parents)	Included in Strategy 3.c. is a milestone relating to addressing the issues of under representation of Hispanic families in the foster care system and the need to increase bilingual resources and services.



Recognizing collaboration as a strategy to conserve staff resources, the Advisory Committee also advocated for foster parents to be viewed as a resource to families, CWS and the child.	CWS/MS, CA	Strategy 3.d. includes milestones to increase training for social workers to facilitate their developing a relationship between birth and foster families, so that the knowledge held by foster parents can be shared.
<p>The case plan is the fundamental tool in child welfare. Critical issues include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pressure of heavy caseloads;</li> <li>• The need for accurate and complete reports in advance of court hearings;</li> <li>• Competing pressures to complete case plans vs. being available for direct services in support of the family and child.</li> </ul> <p>Staff noted a tremendous increase in court caseload; and no increase in resources, resulting in long continuances.</p>	CWS/MS, CA	<p>A key strategy in the SIP is the pilot testing, evaluation, and implementation of a new procedure for the report addressing jurisdictional issues using the Emergency Response Team, noted above.</p> <p>Developing a stronger procedure for integrated case planning with CalWORKS is also incorporated into the SIP (3.e). Note: CWS has made good strides in collaborating with CalWORKS and developing more in-depth collaboration may require regulatory adjustments, as well as changes in processes and procedures. Integration has the potential of using scarce resources more effectively, and also improving the level of service provided to clients.</p>
Opportunities for more training for foster parents as well as birth parents are needed.	CWS/MS, FRC/FG	Included in Strategy 3.d. are several milestones related to utilizing foster parents as resources for birth parents, for training for SWs to help them facilitate the transfer of knowledge between foster parents and birth families (3.d.1).

Issue Identified	Identified By	How this has been integrated into the SIP
Families are challenged by not having basic needs met, such as housing and jobs. These challenges create tremendous stress in their lives. Resources for parents are key in preventing reoccurrence.	FRC/FG	A commitment has been made in the SIP to improve the CalWORKS partnership, so that parents do not have to duplicate efforts to meet requirements of both systems (3.e).
Families want support and help working with their children, particularly teens.	FRC/FG	Strategy 3.e. is designed to improve adolescent and parents' communication skills. The first milestone involves training of the SW's to support reestablishment of relations among teens and their families.
The lack of drug and alcohol services, for families, particularly substance abuse for teens, with training for their parents.	CWS/MS, CA, FRC/FG	Expanding treatment services for substance abuse is difficult in times of budget shortfalls. However, strategy 3.g. envisions a task force to begin to focus on this goal.
ILP is a very important program because it helps foster children	FRC/FG, FTS	Milestone 3.f.2 sets the expectation that ALL foster youth will have an ILP

gain basic living skills needed to return to their families and emancipate successfully.		
There is a lack of trust in the child welfare system. Families want earlier response before a crisis occurs or before treatment is mandated and they want a less adversarial relationship with CPS and more trust in themselves from CPS and the police. Parents asked for the same support and resources available to foster parents.	FRC/FG	The milestone (4.a.) in strategy 4 seeks to involve the SW in developing an individualized support plan so that a crisis may be averted. Having CWS staff participate as speakers for parent trainings (4.b.3) will also increase SWs accessibility to families and present opportunities for community and CWS staff to work together in a non-crisis environment.
Families want more affordable and accessible family recreation programs in their neighborhoods	FRC/FG	Strategy 4.d. is focused on developing more resources for families for aftercare and support.

### Information Sources

1. Solano County Child and Family Services Self Assessment, June, 2004
2. Solano County Child and Family Services Self Assessment Advisory Committee and Staff Meeting Summaries, May and June, 2004
3. The Solano County Child Welfare System Redesign Stakeholders Report, November 2003
4. The Solano County Child Welfare System Redesign Readiness Matrix, November 2003

## C-CFSR Self Assessment/System Improvement Plan Meetings

### CWS Staff Meetings

CWS Managers and Supervisors	Title	Department	May 4	June 8	Sept 14	Sept 24
Laura Fowler	Deputy Director	Solano County Health and Human Services	√	√		
Linda Liles	Manager	Solano County Child Welfare Services	√	√	√	√
Robbie Wilson	Manager	Clerical/Eligibility/SS	√	√	√	√
George Bleasdale	Supervisor	Court	√			
Dennis Sullivan	Supervisor	Licensing	√	√	√	√
Susan Carpio	Supervisor	Clerical	√	√	√	√
Susan Dolan	Supervisor	Community Relations	√	√	√	√
Carol Gentry	Supervisor	Eligibility	√	√		
Cheryl Witbracht	Supervisor	PP	√	√	√	√
Elisa Hidalgo	Supervisor	FM/FR	√	√	√	√
Marie Taylor	Supervisor	FM/FR	√	√	√	√
Dorthey Crawford-Brown	Supervisor	Support Services	√	√	√	√
Christopher Cassels	Supervisor	Staff Development	√	√	√	√
Jacque Butcher-Rankin	Manager	FM/FR/PP/Adoptions	√	√	√	√
Linda Lazenoff	Supervisor	ER	√	√	√	√
Ana Argueta	Supervisor	ER	√	√	√	√
Katherine Kellum	Supervisor	Intake	√	√	√	√
Nancy Goodman	Manager	Solano County H&SS CWS	√	√	√	√

### Community Advisory Committee Meetings

Staff	Department	May 5	June 8	Sept 14	Sept 24
Laura Fowler	Solano County Health and Human Services	√	√		
Linda Liles	Solano County H&SS CWS	√	√	√	√
Nancy Goodman	Solano County H&SS CWS	√	√	√	√

Community Members	Community Agency	May 5	June 8	Aug 14	Aug 24
Walt Irwin	Probation	√	√	√	√
Aaron Crutison	CalWORKS			√	√
Rosemary Lewis	CalWORKS			√	√
Jo Anne Chiariello	Aspira Foster and Family Services	√			
Sheri Justice-Cook	Solano County FPA	√	√	√	√

<b>Community Members</b>	<b>Community Agency</b>	<b>May 5</b>	<b>June 8</b>	<b>Sept 14</b>	<b>Sept 24</b>
Thelma Welch	Solano County FPA	√			
Helen Oatman	Solano County FPA		√		
Steve Schmidbauer	Families First	√	√		
Antoinette Harris	Families First	√	√		
Yolanda Gary-Vieyra	Families First	√			
Rosemary Kennedy	Children's Network	√	√	√	√
Debbie Sorg	Children's Youth Support Network	√		√	√
Dottie Fair	Foster & Kinship Care Foundation – Solano College	√		√	√
Lorraine Hargrove	Children In Need Of Hugs	√	√		
Lori Cohee	Foster A Dream	√	√		
Judith Lorde	Youth and Family Services	√	√		
Ansar Muhammad	With Loving Care, Inc	√			
Khaleedah Muhammad	With Loving Care, Inc	√			
Jenny Ocon	The Childrens Network	√	√		

### **One on One Interviews – September 2004**

- Four Biological Parents

### **Inter Agency Meeting – May 18, 2004**

Walt Irwin	Probation
Nancy Goodman	Solano County H&SS CWS
Linda Liles	Solano County H&SS CWS
Debbie Terry-Butler	Children's Mental Health
Carol Uechart	School District

### **Juvenile Court Meeting – May 27, 2004**

Linda Liles	Solano County H&SS CWS
Laura Fowler	Deputy Director CWS
J. Paul Coan	Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Alberta Chew	Family Law Commissioner
Kevin Solt	Attorney, Public Defender
Kathryn Stahnke	Minors' Counsel
Reba Cardoza	Deputy County Counsel
Patricia Peterson	Private Counsel (Appointed)
Brandi Lockhart	CWS Court Officer

## **V. Summary Assessment**

Using the County Data Report, Solano County Child Welfare Services has surveyed its environment to identify demographic, community and agency-specific strengths and weaknesses, established benchmarks for an array of measures, both process and outcome and identified positive and negative contributory factors related to each factor. The analysis of the outcomes for which data is found is identified in Section II of this report. The findings are summarized below.

### **Summary of Performance for each C-CFSR Outcome**

#### **Outcome 1: *Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.***

With 8.2 percent of children experiencing subsequent abuse/neglect within 6 months of the initial substantiated allegation, Solano County's performance has exceeded the state expectation for recurrence of maltreatment but not the federal target. For children in foster care, there were no cases of abuse and neglect during either of the study periods.

#### **Factors impacting the outcome:**

- The use of two different tools for risk assessment.
- An expanded Emergency Response Team.
- Aggressive licensing, monitoring and issuance of corrective plans as appropriate.
- The Integrated Family Support Initiative, a prevention strategy targeting isolated families with children 0-5.
- Active foster parent associations and a strong parent training.
- The county has a full time Community Liaison staff within CWS who trains mandated reporters and community partners on reporting responsibilities as well as educating them about CWS. An increase in the mandatory reporting trainings may impact the awareness of risk factors in the community.

#### **Improvement is needed:**

- To expand the accessibility of county services and the availability of community services for families who are non-English speaking, with a goal of fairness and equity.
- To continue to apply resources and staff support so that the best placement is sought based on the needs of the child, not simply the most readily available placement.

#### **Outcome 2: Children are maintained safely in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.**

Solano County performs well in this outcome, considerably exceeding both federal and state expectations. A significant factor contributing to this outcome is the broad array of

services available and accessible to families and a strong collaborative culture among county and community agencies. With a 20 percent increase in cases in the last five years, additional staffing resources have been focused on responding to high-risk referrals. In one quarter of the referrals requiring a ten-day response, this time frame has not been met. Timely response to determine child abuse/neglect is an important area for improvement. However, demonstrating improvements will be challenging given current staffing constraints, which are unlikely to significantly improve, given California's current budget.

A timely social worker visit was recorded for just under 50 percent of children for whom a monthly visit is necessary. The county believes this percentage does not accurately reflect the number of children seen on a timely basis. 2003 marked the beginning of using the case plan in CWS/CMS, the place where visit exemptions can be recorded. The county expects to see an improvement in performance with the use of this data field.

**Outcome 3:** Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing reentry to foster care.

With approximately two thirds of children in foster care for less than 12 months prior to reunification, Solano County achieved the state target for rapid reunification. Similarly, the County achieved the state standard for timely adoption, with 25 percent of children adopted in less than 24 months after removal from home.

The statistic for the state standard for the same outcome is only 3.3 percent which is due to data entry errors. Achievements in making stable, permanent living situations are challenged by several factors, the most significant being:

- A crowded court calendar, which makes it difficult to move to permanency or to terminate parental rights.
- Limited staff resources, which delay mandated visits and make permanency planning difficult.
- Limited availability of foster homes for severely emotionally disturbed children and children with special needs.

Proven strategies to improve outcomes and experiences in this arena include:

- More aggressive use of concurrency planning
- Integrating adoption practices earlier in the case plan, and
- Implementation of the Family to Family program.

**Outcome 4:** *The family relationships and connections of children served by CWS will be preserved, as appropriate.*

CWS' priority is to place children with relatives if possible and, if not, to match children with foster families based on the children's needs, with qualifying relatives being the first choice. A high rate of initial placement in FFAs is related to the lack of a 23-hour

receiving facility until 2003. With this in place, it is expected that initial placements in FFA's will diminish.

When children are removed from low-income areas, it is often difficult to find foster family homes within their own community that meet the state requirements of bedroom space per child.

**Outcome 8:** *Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs. Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood.*

This measure reflects the percent of foster children eligible for Independent Living Services who receive appropriate educational and training, and/or achieve employment or economic self-sufficiency. This measure includes data regarding youths, ages 16 through 20, who receive services from the Independent Living Foster Care Program. It identifies the number of youths receiving Independent Living Program services, the program outcomes for those youths, and certain client characteristics. The data presented do not represent the complete picture of foster youth in Solano County. Though all foster youth are eligible for Independent Living Services, only \_\_\_\_\_ percent are using the services.

The CWS Redesign identified as a high priority the preparation of youth for successful transition to adulthood, with a guaranteed preparation package for every youth leaving the system, that provides them with basic living skills and the support of a well-trained caregiver, and the development of a transition living plan that documents activities and accomplishments needed to prepare youth to transition and which engages youth in the planning process. The Redesign recommended an exit plan for all children by age 15.5.

### **Summary of Systemic Factors**

Although there are specific factors that contribute to each outcome, it is important to identify the broad systemic factors that positively impact overall results as well as those areas in need of improvement.

**MIS/Quality Assurance:** Implementation of better management information tools, including CWS/CMS and Safe Measures. These tools provide CWS administration and staff immediate access to child, family and case-specific information to support timely interventions and decision-making and for monitoring and evaluating programs and services.

**Case Review:** The case review process is characterized by collaborative team decision-making where all parties are represented (trial management conferences), social workers are responsive and foster parents are valued. CWS and the courts have made a commitment to conduct hearings with adherence to principles of fairness and equity and to foster a less-adversarial court environment. For over ten years, Solano County has worked with a Minor's Attorney and most parents have

separate representation. Staff in the FFMR and PP units meet with the Minor's attorney twice a month to discuss and review specific cases.

**Licensing Standards:** The county strives to ensure that licensing and approval standards for all placement types are rigorously and effectively established, maintained and enforced consistent with recommended national standards. Established processes are in place to ensure that if a child's needs are not being met by the caregiver, including any changes in the condition of the home that could jeopardize the child's safety or well being, the caseworker is prepared to make recommendations for corrective action or may recommend removal of the child from the placement.

**Recruitment and Retention of Foster/Adoptive Parents:** Recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents are ongoing challenges particularly for children with diverse cultural and ethnic needs. The number of African American homes is a testament to positive work in recruitment and retention, but the need for additional culturally diverse homes continues as a high need in the County.

Virtually all stakeholders identified effective foster parent training as strength. There are three active foster parent associations in Solano County that work closely and collaboratively with the county to provide support, services and training to foster families. The county provides funding to send foster parents to the annual statewide foster parent conference. One important area for improvement, identified in the Redesign, is to ensure a child development component in parent education and training programs.

**Staffing:** CWS has been able to hire limited term staff to fill temporary vacancies and to increase staffing overall, e.g. increases in social workers. A priority has been established to recruit bi-lingual staff to better meet the needs of the families served within the county.

Ongoing training and staff development has been established as a high priority. A dedicated training supervisor implements, coordinates and monitors the staff training programs. In addition to staff development, the training focuses on comprehensive and standardized application of policies and support for maximizing team collaboration.

**CWS Redesign:** The redesign process has fostered the development of short and long term plans to improve the effectiveness of the child welfare services, and to strive for a system where each child has the opportunity to have a safe and stable family where their developmental needs are met.

**Service Array and Collaboratives:** Solano County has an impressive service network characterized by effective inter-relationships, and MOUs, for example with Children's Network, law enforcement, IFSI and Family Resource Centers. Other collaboratives include trial management conferences, case conferences in the child's



attorney's office, Interagency Committee staffings, internal CWS staffings, etc. IFSI brings together multiple agencies to work with families to focus on at risk children 0-5. The Community Liaison staff position meets with community groups and establishes MOU's with the community partners on strengthening and coordinating response to child abuse/neglect situations, including 200 mandated reporter trainings annually

### **Strategies for the Future**

Four factors present major challenges to CWS in realizing improvements, including:

- **Chronic understaffing**, particularly in light of a 20 percent increase in caseload over the past five years.
- **Underfunding**, including a major disappointment in not receiving funding to implement the Family-to-Family program.
- **Relationship to the courts** to continue to focus on improving collaboration between CWS and the courts to support families and children in foster care.
- **Fairness and Equity** to improve and strengthen the cultural competency of the staff to better meet the needs of the population served by CWS.

### **Next Steps in the Self-Assessment**

Through the self-assessment process, the County staff and the Community Advisory Committee have identified four measures where improvement efforts will be focused in the System Improvement Plan (SIP). These measures are:

1. Increase in the percent of child abuse/neglect referrals with a timely response and increase in the rate of monthly contact with children in caseloads. (Outcome 2)
2. Increase in the proportion of children who exit foster care to reunification within 12 months. (Outcome 3)
3. Reduce the rate of foster care re entry. (Outcome 3)
4. Increase in the proportion of children who exit foster care to adoption within 24 months. (Outcome 3)

## V. System Improvement Plan (SIP) Work plan

**OUTCOME/SYSTEMIC FACTOR, SAFETY:** Increase in the percent of child abuse/neglect referrals with a timely response (2.B.State)

**County Current Performance:** The County is cautioned against comparing themselves with other counties on outcome measures; however, it is noted that statewide, there is a 93.6% compliance (Q2 2003) in cases where immediate response is indicated; and 90.6% compliance in cases where a 10-day time frame is deemed appropriate. Solano County's performance on immediate response cases is close to the state average. The relatively low performance for 10-day response is the result of staffing constraints. Since the 24-hour cases are a higher priority, when staff is not available due to vacations or extended leaves (e.g. disability), the 10-day cases suffer. A major obstacle to addressing this has been removed with the county's authorization for the hiring of limited term staff to manage the caseload of staff on leave.

Indicator 2B. Percent of child abuse/neglect referrals with a timely response:

	Immediate Response Compliance		10 Day Response Compliance	
	Solano County	California	Solano County	California
Q2 2003	94.0%	94.5%	76.7%	88.6%
Q3 2003	91.7%	93.6%	71.3%	90.6%

**Improvement Goal 1:** Increase to 90% the percentage of cases in which face-to-face contact with a child occurs, or is attempted, within the 10-day response time required by regulation.

**Strategy 1.a.** Utilize team to pilot new method of moving cases through the system in which the responsibility for the report addressing jurisdictional issues is moved from Emergency Response Units to the Court Unit. Team will include an Emergency Response worker, a Court worker and a Family Maintenance/Family Reunification worker.

**Strategy Rationale** The pilot project will shift the responsibility for the comprehensive report from ER to the Court Unit. Shifting responsibilities so that the Emergency Response worker is responsible for a brief report, filed within the 48-hour time frame, and enlisting the court worker to complete a comprehensive investigation within 30 days, will reduce the emergency response workload and increase available time for the 10-day referral response.

Milestone	1.a.1. Pilot a project to develop the process and procedural changes for completing the jurisdictional report.	Timeframe	Sept 30, 2004	Assigned to	CWS Managers and Supervisors
	1.a.2. Prepare analysis of pilot results.		Jan 31, 2005		CWS Managers and Supervisors
	1.a.3. Implement procedural changes based on pilot results.		Feb 28, 2005 and ongoing		CWS Managers and Supervisors

**Strategy 1.b** Identify and secure grants from public and private sectors to enable the department to increase staffing.

**Strategy Rationale** A contributory factor in the chronic and persistent staffing shortages is county budget shortfalls. Diversifying funding can stabilize programs. Additional funding can often be targeted at demonstration projects to improve and strengthen the system.

Milestone	1.b.1. Implement activities funded by the domestic violence grant, which include hiring of a SW who will assume responsibility for domestic violence related referrals.	Timeframe	Sept 30, 2004	Assigned to	Deputy Director
	1.b.2. Identify and pursue additional grant funding opportunities.		Nov 30, 2004		Deputy Director

<b>Strategy 1.c</b> Collaborate closely with Human Resources to streamline the process for providing temporary staff to fill for absent staff and those on extended leave.			<b>Strategy Rationale:</b> County procedures and other work force factors may hinder effective recruitment and retention of qualified staff, particularly individuals for limited term assignments. This strategy may require formal changes to hiring policies, e.g. to streamline the hiring of temporary staff.		
Milestone	1.c.1. Add additional clerical staff based on the results from the Solano County Health and Social Services comprehensive In-House Clerical Support Study.	Timeframe	Nov 30, 2004	Assigned to	Deputy Director
	1.c.2. Establish an extra hire/float position to provide coverage for absent staff.		Jan 31, 2005		Deputy Director
	1.c.3. With Human Resources, explore establishing a pool of qualified substitutes, similar to a nursing pool in hospitals, or substitute teacher roster in schools.		March 31, 2005		Deputy Director

**Describe systemic factors that positively impact this outcome:**

- Since the last data was collected, three social worker positions have been added to the Emergency Response Units.
- The county has been authorized to hire limited term staff to fill in for those staff that are on disability or other leave.

**Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal**

A child welfare services system workload study funded through SB 2030 in 1998 demonstrated that the state provided only a third of the resources needed to carry out its mandated core responsibilities. Since the completion of the study, there has been no additional funding or other support added for the system.

**Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.**

Training of staff in jurisdictional report writing.

**Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.**

Continued collaboration with the court system.

**Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.**

None.

**OUTCOME/SYSTEMIC FACTOR, SAFETY:** Increase in the rate of monthly contact with children in caseloads (2C)

**County's Current Performance:** According to Solano data, approximately 30% of children do not receive timely visits with a social worker. The low rate of timely social worker visits is believed to be primarily a data anomaly, rooted in a county decision to continue using older software to document existing cases after the CWS/CMS system was implemented resulting in no data entry for cases with contact exemptions. As cases have court hearing dates, the old system is being phased out. All new cases have a case plan documented in CWS/CMS. However, timely data entry remains a challenge even in the new system, and opportunities to improve performance by reducing travel time have not been explored.

Indicator 2 C. Percent of timely social worker visits with child

Q4 2003	Oct 2003	Nov 2003	Dec 2003
	69.6%	69.8%	71.6%
Q3 2003 (revised)	Jul 2003	Aug 2003	Sep 2003
	72.1%	71.7%	73.6%
Q2 2003 (revised)	Apr 2003	May 2003	Jun 2003
	63.2%	64.6%	64.8%

**Improvement Goal 2:** Increase the percentage of children who are visited by a Social Worker on a monthly basis to 90%.

**Strategy 2.a** Improve timeliness and accuracy of data entry. Establish documentation standard that requires SW's to enter contacts immediately i.e. by the end of the day or the end of the week.

**Strategy Rationale** Since the relatively low performance in this measure is due to incomplete implementation of CWS/CMS, the key to improvement is timely and accurate data entry into the CWS/CMS.

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>2.a.1.</b> Supervisors develop an individual work plan with each SW that will improve timely entry of data.	<b>Timeframe</b>	October 30, 2004	<b>Assigned to</b>	Supervisors
	<b>2.a.2.</b> Require SWs to enter contact information immediately, e.g. by end of day or end of the week.		October 30, 2004		Supervisors
	<b>2.a.3.</b> Continue use of existing compliance log, with an additional box to check to indicate data entry has been completed.		October 30, 2004		Supervisors
	<b>2.a.4.</b> Train all SWs to enter secondary assignment for courtesy supervision cases so other SWs are able to enter contacts.		November 30, 2004		Staff Development Supervisor with monitoring by other supervisors
	<b>2.a.5.</b> Supervisors monitor use of case plans in system so that data will accurately reflect when exemptions are in place.		November 30, 2004 and ongoing		QI/QA manager with input from Supervisors
	<b>2.a.6.</b> Establish internal recognition program to publicly honor staff that are achieving the outcome of 90%.		November 30, 2004		Deputy Director

	<b>2.a.7.</b> Develop internal work group to identify potential ways to reorganize clerical tasks or reassigning some duties to improve data entry		Jan 31, 2005		Deputy Director and CWS Managers
	<b>2.a.8.</b> Use Safe Measures reporting mechanism to monitor and ensure that the 10-day contacts are made.		Ongoing		QI/QA manager with input from Supervisors

<b>Strategy 2.b</b> Minimize travel time for visits with children and families.			<b>Strategy Rationale:</b> Travel time is time unavailable for either work with child and family or data entry.		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>2.b.1.</b> Complete 2 brainstorm sessions to identify ways to coordinate visits e.g. when parent visits child, CWS can coordinate with SW to see the parent and family at the same time.	<b>Timeframe</b>	November 30, 2004	<b>Assigned to</b>	Supervisors
	<b>2.b.2.</b> Implement pilot program to test whether coordinating results in less travel time while maintaining quality of visits.		March 31, 2005		Supervisors
	<b>2.b.3.</b> Based on results, develop and disseminate new procedure throughout department.		June 30, 2005 and ongoing		Supervisors
	<b>2.b.4.</b> Develop and implement procedures to enable SWs to utilize office visits when possible. Parents and foster parents, with children, can come to the office.		June 30, 2005 and ongoing		Deputy Director

**Describe systemic factors that positively impact this outcome:**

The county utilizes Business Objects with three current licenses and added the Safe Measures data system in June 2003. All supervisors and managers have access to Safe Measures as a tool for reviewing staff's caseloads as to compliance and outcomes. Both tools are utilized to ensure certain data are correctly entered and that reports accurately reflect current activity. Once accurate the data can provide the tools to determine where improvement efforts need to be focused.

**Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.**

The county has been authorized to hire limited term staff to fill in for those staff that are on disability or other leave.

**Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.** Ongoing training in use of CMS/CWS, so that data entry is as efficient as possible.

**Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.**

This is primarily an internal departmental issue.

**Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.**

None.

**OUTCOME/SYSTEMIC FACTOR, PERMANENCY & STABILITY:** Increase in the proportion of children who exit foster care to reunification within 12 months. (3A + 3E)

**County's Current Performance:** Solano County fails to meet the State target for Measure 3E, which measures the percent of children reunified within 12 months of removal of a child from their home, even though it achieved the Federal target. One source of delay relates to the number of continuances of court hearings and lack of resources and/or immediately available resources. The County performance is summarized below:

**Measure 3A (State):** For all children who entered foster care for the first time (and stayed at least five days) during the 12-month study period, what percent were reunified within 12 months? (Note that this indicator looks at a cohort of children who entered care during a specific time period.)

3A. Percent reunified within 12 months (entry cohort)	
12-month study period	
01/01/02-12/31/02	28.9%
10/01/01-09/30/02	35.1%
07/01/01-06/30/02	33.1%

**Measure 3E (Federal):** Of all children who were reunified from child welfare supervised foster care during the 12-month study period, what percent had been in care for less than 12 months? (Note that this indicator looks at the cohort of all children who were reunified during a specific time period.)

3E. Percent reunified within 12 months (Fed)	
12-month study period	
Federal target	≥76.2
State target	57.2
01/01/03-12/31/03	72.8%
10/01/02-09/30/03	62.3%
07/01/02-06/30/03	59.1%

**Improvement Goal 3:** Increase the proportion of children who exit foster care to reunification within 12 months to 38%.

**Strategy 3.a** Collaborate with court system to reduce time lost in continuances.

**Strategy Rationale** Although much of the timeline to exit foster care to reunification is fixed, due to legally-mandated timing of court hearings, there is opportunity for improvement in reducing the number of continuances and contests which are initiated by SWs as well as those initiated by attorneys and other stakeholders. SWs may request continuances because they are unable to complete reports during the required timeframe, given their caseloads or because of last minute developments in the case.

Milestone	3.a.1. Utilize the monthly meeting of juvenile court personnel to discuss the impact of continuances and strategize ways to minimize them.	Timeframe	January 31, 2005	Assigned to	CWS Managers and Supervisors
	3.a.2. Work with supervisors to monitor and hold their staff accountable to ensure reports are completed in a timely fashion.		October 31, 2005		CWS Managers
	3.a.3. Convene at least 2 meetings to explore how CASA's can be enlisted to help move cases through the court system.		November 31, 2004 and ongoing		Deputy Director

**Strategy 3.b** Reduce the number of social workers assigned to any one case.

**Strategy Rationale** Studies have shown that reunification efforts are positively impacted when a consistent social worker is assigned to each case.

Milestone	3.b.1. Develop and implement new method of completing the jurisdictional reports which includes transferring the case from ER directly to FM/FR for case management.	Timeframe	November 31, 2004	Assigned to	CWS Managers and Supervisors
	3.b.2. Continue to monitor and minimize staff transfers from unit to unit.		Ongoing		CWS Managers and Supervisors

**Strategy 3.c** Address the issues of overrepresentation of African American children and under representation of Hispanic children in the foster care system.

**Strategy Rationale** The county is convening a fairness and equity work group comprised of African American social workers who are assigned to Emergency Response. The group's mandate is to analyze the root causes for the racial disparity in CWS caseload, and to determine what approach might result in a more reasonable proportion of African American children in the foster care population.

For the Hispanic population, access to services has been a factor in their under-representation. The number of referrals made by Spanish-speaking callers has risen noticeably, as has the number of Hispanic children in foster care.

Milestone	3.c.1. Prepare the findings from the workgroup on fairness and equity.	Timeframe	April 30, 2005	Assigned to	Deputy Director and Workgroup Representatives
	3.c.2. Develop an action plan to move forward on addressing the issues of fairness and equity.		May 30, 2005		CWS Managers and Supervisors
	3.c.3. Continue to focus recruitment efforts for bilingual staff to address the increase in calls from Spanish-speaking reporters and the need for services to Spanish-speaking clients.		November 30, 2004 Ongoing		Deputy Director and CWS Managers

<b>Strategy 3.d</b> Involve foster parents/relatives as part of the team in working with parents to support Family Reunification		<b>Strategy Rationale:</b> Foster parents, having access to training, have acquired skills to help deal with children with special needs. They can help support the birth parents' acquisition of more skills prior to reunification. They can also facilitate visits prior to reunification for parents to practice newly learned skills.			
Milestone	3.d.1. Provide training to SWs to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and parenting skills from foster parents/kin caregivers to birth families, including strategies for working with special needs issues.	Timeframe	October 31, 2005, and ongoing	Assigned to	Foster Parent Associations, CWS Social Workers, Supervisors
	3.d.2. Work with community based agencies to seek grant funding for birth parent/child visitation programs.		Ongoing		Deputy Director and CWS Managers
<b>Strategy 3.e</b> Promote an organizational culture and administrative infrastructure that leads to more/better coordinated case planning for families through the CalWORKS Linkages.		<b>Strategy Rationale.</b> Data from the September 1996 <i>Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect</i> <sup>2</sup> indicate that “children from families with annual incomes below \$15,000, as compared to children from families with annual incomes above \$30,000, were over 22 times more likely to experience some form of maltreatment.” Because of this, it makes sense to prevent entrance into CWS by offering prevention services to TANF participants; and it makes sense to offer low-income CWS clients financial support to assist them with self-sufficiency.			
Milestone	3.e.1. Establish planning group: staff at all levels, participants, families, contractors, community partners and other stakeholders to explore more in-depth collaboration, building on the work of the CalWORKS/Child Welfare Alliance (use Planning Guide developed by CCRWF) <a href="http://www.ccrwf.org/calworks/pdf/PlanningGuideFinal.pdf">http://www.ccrwf.org/calworks/pdf/PlanningGuideFinal.pdf</a>	Timeframe	November 30, 2005	Assigned to	Deputy Director, CalWORKS staff and CWS staff
	3.e.2. Increase number of case plans jointly developed with CalWORKS.		September 30, 2005 and ongoing		Special Programs Supervisor, CWS Managers and Supervisors
<b>Strategy 3.f</b> Improve services to adolescents to promote open communication and encourage Family Reunification among a population that often just doesn't “want to go home.”		<b>Strategy Rationale</b> The family's communication can contribute to the general atmosphere of the family's day-to-day interactions. Research has shown a relationship between parent-adolescent communication and several adjustment outcomes, such as adolescent self-esteem, academic achievement, and well being. Even if reunification does not occur, facilitating communication can improve the lives of adolescent children and minimize the isolation of young adults as they emancipate from the system.			



Milestone	3.f.1. Provide training to SWs to help them provide encouragements to families to re-establish relationships between parents and adolescents.	Timeframe	November 30, 2004	Assigned to	Supervisors, Social workers, case workers, foster parents
	3.f.2. Set expectations of the importance of ILP for all foster youth 15-18 yrs.		April 30, 2005		Social workers, foster parents

<b>Strategy 3.g</b> Develop more substance abuse treatment programs in the County, particularly ones where children can be with their parents.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Currently there is only one facility in Solano County and it is limited to children 0-2		
Milestone	3.g.1. Identify partners to participate in a task force to expand substance abuse treatment resources in the county.	Timeframe	November 30, 2004	Assigned to	QI/QA Manager and Community Partners
	3.g.2. Work with existing treatment programs utilized in other counties to expand their program to Solano.		November 30, 2004		Deputy Director and CWS Managers
	3.g.3. Explore developing a program for fathers and their children.				

**Describe systemic factors that positively impact this outcome:**

- The relationship with CWS and the court system continues to strengthen and improve.
- CWS places high priority on maintaining family connections for children in foster care. Where appropriate, support services (transportation) are available to ensure that the child maintains connection with parents and siblings.
- 80% of the work of the Special Programs Supervisor is dedicated to the Linkages Project.
- The County added a second FM/FR Supervisor and additional workers.

**Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.**

- Using the team review process (including parents and child as appropriate) before a child is moved to a second placement and family engagement practices to improve case planning.
- Challenges are identified as: an increased caseload without additional staff and resources which results in a crowded calendar and lengthy continuances, an influx of private attorneys who fight for each client resulting in regularly contested hearings; rotation of counsel; under-representation of communities of color in the court system; and resources to monitor and support mandates.

**Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.**

- Work with Bay Area Training Academy to develop trainings on writing individualized service plans. Encourage BATA to offer additional training for reconnecting of families in next training cycle.

**Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.**

- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) involvement promotes timely processing of cases. The judicial officer and child welfare staff meet regularly and participate in trial management conferences. A Minors' Attorney and Legal Services for Children are readily available to promote rapid reunification.
- Solano College Foster Parent training program; PRIDE training; ongoing availability of trainers as mentors.
- Shamia Recovery Center provides residential services for women with children less than 2 years of age.

**Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.**

- Mandate ILP for all youth 15-18 years.
- Resources to support the requirement for 'reasonable services'.

**OUTCOME/SYSTEMIC FACTOR, PERMANENCY & STABILITY: Reduce the rate of foster care re entry. (3F & 3G)**

**County's Current Performance:** Solano County failed to achieve the state and federal targets for foster care re-entry in the first quarter's data. However subsequently the county has demonstrated significant improvement and currently meets the federal and state mandates. However the county believes that continuing to focus on maintaining positive results on this outcome is critical to the safety of our children.

Factors believed to impact this performance are thought to include a high rate of re-removals triggered by a relapse of a parent into substance abuse. In addition, parents who are clean and sober can be overwhelmed by the challenges of parenting their child for the first time or of parenting an adolescent with whom they have not established a parental relationship in the past. Solano County staff also is challenged by the regulatory limit on family maintenance services and the lack of a crisis nursery or a crisis center for adolescents, which includes conflict resolution services.

Federal: For all children who entered child welfare supervised foster care during the 12-month study period, what percent were subsequent entries within 12 months of a prior exit?

3F. Percent of admissions who are re-entries (Fed) during a 12-month study period?

Federal Target	≤8.6 %
State Target	9.4 %
01/01/03-12/31/03	8.3%
10/01/02-09/30/03	8.1%
07/01/02-06/30/03	11.2%

State: For all children who entered child welfare supervised foster care for the first time (and stayed at least five days) during the 12 month study period and were reunified within 12 months of entry, what percent re-entered foster care within 12 months of reunification?

3G. Percent who re-entered within 12 months of reunification (entry cohort reunified within 12 months)

12-month study period	
01/01/01-12/31/01	5.9%
10/01/00-09/30/01	10.1%
07/01/00-06/30/01	11.9%

**Improvement Goal 4: Reduce the rate of foster care re entry to 7.5%.**

**Strategy 4.a** Improve perception of CWS as a resource after families have exited the system.

**Strategy Rationale** If there is a positive perception, CWS can become a resource in the support plan and can help proactively address issues rather than having to remove the children from the home again.

Milestone	4.a.1. Provide training to SWs to develop individualized support plan for families exiting the system with names, phones numbers and other contact information for use if a crisis occurs.	Timeframe	September 30, 2004	Assigned to	CWS Managers and Supervisors, including Supervisor, Staff development
	4.a.2. Enlist help of Family Resource Center to include information about CWS as a resource to new families		April 30, 2005		Deputy Director
	4.a.3. Participate as speakers in trainings for parents provided by Office of Education and Family Resource Centers		April 30, 2005 and ongoing		CWS Managers and Supervisors

<b>Strategy 4.b</b> Increase contacts to Family Maintenance cases to assess for any stress/issues, which should be addressed to prevent re-entry.			<b>Strategy Rationale.</b> Increasing the number of visits to families to be more than once a month increases the potential of identifying important issues.		
Milestone	4.b.1. Provide training to SW to encourage their seeing FM children away from home at least part of the time to encourage disclosure of arising issues.	Timeframe	March 31, 2005 and ongoing	Assigned to	Supervisors
	4.b.2. Work with community partners to assist in making contacts with families.		Ongoing		Case manager
	4.b.3. Develop procedures and MOUs to formalize coordination of family visits among Public Health, CalWORKS, Child Haven, Mental Health therapists so that problems are identified early		April 30, 2005		CWS Managers and Deputy Director

<b>Strategy 4.c</b> Work with Community Partners to increase the number of resources available for families for aftercare and support.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Local resources are most accessible and can best support families in their communities.		
Milestone	4.c.1. Conduct roundtable with community partners to identify needs for aftercare.	Timeframe	November 31, 2004	Assigned to	Deputy Director
	4.c.2. Encourage community partners (Foster Kinship Program and/or Family Resource Centers) to develop more training opportunities for parents whose children have special needs/behavior issues.		Immediately and ongoing		Deputy Director

**Describe systemic factors that positively impact this outcome:**

- The County uses two different tools for risk assessment: the emergency response assessment tool whenever a referral is closed, when a case opens and at other key points during the life of a case; and the family assessment factor analysis, also known as the Fresno Risk Assessment Tool, when a case opens. These tools determine levels of safety, risk, parental protective capacity and family strengths and needs throughout the life of in-home and out-of-home cases.
- Regular case conferences are designed to prevent re-entry.
- CWS provides after care services for a minimum of 6 months after children are reunified.
- The Integrated Family Support Initiative (IFSI), which is the beginning of a program of differential response, provides in-home family support services to at risk families with children ages 0-5 living in Solano County.
- In 2004, a Spanish Speaking intake worker was added to staff.
- The Community Liaison outreach and trainings on mandated reporting.

**Describe systemic factors that challenge improving this outcome:**

- No crisis nursery to provide respite when there is not a child welfare issue.
- No crisis center for runaway teens that includes parent teen conflict services.
- Parents, with a history of substance abuse who have become clean and sober, experience frustration in parenting their children for the first time.
- Locating court authorized resources can be challenging.

**Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.**

- An increase in substance abuse services and resources.
- Need more Spanish-speaking support services.
- An increase in mental health services for children and psychiatric beds.

**Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.**

- More specialized training for families e.g. "Family to Family"
- More joint trainings with staff and foster families

**Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.**

- A collaboration with schools and Family Resource Centers to identify and help families access local resources to meet their needs, including parenting education, family recreation, job search, transportation, child care, and basic needs. Schools and FRCs are also important as providers of additional services ranging from mentoring programs to food pantries.
- The PASSS program is a partnership between the Vacaville Police Department and local elementary schools aimed at resolving issues for at-risk youth.
- Family Investigative Response and Services Team (FIRST) is a special unit of the Vacaville Police Department that encompasses domestic violence, adult abuse and child abuse. It is a multi-disciplinary family services team staffed by investigators, clinicians, and family support advocates.
- Children's Network facilitates partnerships among public and private agencies to promote community and inter-agency support for families and access to resources.
- Families First Commission focusing on children 0-5 years and providing funding for in home services as children reunify.
- The Juvenile Division of the Probation Department also provides services under the regulations for Title IV E case management services for children in foster care-group home placement services. The Health and Social Services Department and the Probation Department work cooperatively to provide services to children and families who come to the attention of both agencies.

**Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.**

- The 12-month limit on in-home services (state statute) is inadequate to prevent maltreatment in some cases.
- The regulatory limit on family maintenance services (12 months) is inadequate for families with substantial needs.

**OUTCOME/SYSTEMIC FACTOR, PERMANENCY AND STABILITY:** Increase in the proportion of children who exit foster care to adoption within 24 months. (3A)

**County's Current Performance:** Solano County's performance meets the state target, but fails to achieve the federal target. The county attributes the low percentage reported in 3A to a data entry issue; the county began to enter adoption data in 2003. Although the county failed to achieve the federal target in 3D, the state target was exceeded.

**Measure 3A: Percent adopted within 24 months**

State: For all children who entered child welfare supervised foster care for the first time (and stayed at least five days) during the 12-month study period, what percent were adopted within 24 months

3A. Percent adopted within 24 months (entry cohort)	
12-month study period	
01/01/01-12/31/01	5.3%
10/01/00-09/30/01	3.3%
07/01/00-06/30/01	2.7%

Federal: Of all children who were adopted from child welfare supervised foster care during the 12-month study period, what percent had been in care for less than 24 months?

3D. Percent adopted within 24 months (Fed)	
Federal Target	≥32.0
State Target	20.9
12-month study period	
01/01/03-12/31/03	26.9%
10/1/02-9/30/03	25.6%
7/1/02-6/30/03	18.8%

**Improvement Goal 5:** Increase the number of children adopted within 24 months to 30%.

**Strategy 5.a** Collaborate with court system to streamline process and move cases through the system more quickly

**Strategy Rationale** Long delays in obtaining orders to end reunification services and to terminate parental rights can make it impossible to achieve this goal. The fact that parents often contest one or both of these orders combined with the crowded court calendar can add six months or more to the timeframe to achieve an order for adoption services. Child Welfare Services hopes to collaborate with the court to find solutions to this obstacle.

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>5.a.1.</b> Complete the jurisdictional report pilot process to achieve jurisdiction in a more timely manner and set the tone for continuing to have hearings and rulings within the mandated timeframes.  (Note: See milestones for Strategy 1.a)	<b>Timeframe</b>	Jan 31, 2005	<b>Assigned to</b>	CWS Managers and Supervisors
	<b>5.a.2.</b> Implement procedural changes based on pilot results.		Feb 28, 2005 and ongoing		CWS Managers and Supervisors

<b>Strategy 5.b</b> Identify any issues that might delay completion of a home study and/or finalization of an adoption earlier in the process so they can be addressed without causing such delays.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> The current process, in which adoptions workers are not assigned until the decision has been made to terminate parental rights, results in delays while adoption-related issues are addressed and resolved. Home study must be complete for adoption to move forward. Concurrent action on both home study and the court process facilitates more rapid adoption process.		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>5.b.1.</b> Hire Adoption Supervisor	<b>Timeframe</b>	Completed	<b>Assigned to</b>	<b>Deputy Director</b>
	<b>5.b.2.</b> Utilize an outside agency to complete home studies		Ongoing		Adoption Manager and Supervisor
	<b>5.b.3.</b> Assign adoption worker to every case		January 31, 2005		Manager, Adoption Supervisor
	<b>5.b.4.</b> Schedule internal adoption work concurrently so that it is complete when court process is complete.		Ongoing		Adoption Supervisor

<b>Strategy 5.c</b> Change perception so that staff view all children as adoptable.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> The change in focus is critical to the successful adoption of older children and children with special needs.		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>5.c.1.</b> Provide training to all staff on a quarterly basis to recognize adoption as a viable option.	<b>Timeframe</b>	September 30, 2004 and ongoing	<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director and Supervisors
	<b>5.c.2.</b> Establish accountability measure regarding adoption of older children;		February 28, 2005		Training Supervisor; Child Welfare Supervisors, staff
	<b>5.c.3.</b> Recruit adoptive families for older children/sibling groups/special needs children		February 28, 2005		Manager, Adoption Supervisor
	<b>5.c.4.</b> Explore grant opportunities to fund family recruitment efforts.		April 30, 2005		Deputy Director and Adoption Manager

**Describe systemic factors that positively impact this outcome:**

- Concurrent planning results in placement in the permanent home more rapidly, which can impact the time to adoption.
- Solano County CWS includes an adoption unit, which is licensed as an adoption agency by the State of California. Over the last ten years, the adoptions program has grown from under 10 a year to more than 50 adoptions annually.

**Describe systemic factors that challenge improving this outcome:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The court calendar is crowded and impacts the time to move to permanency or terminate parental rights.</li> <li>• Excessive caseloads do not allow caseworkers to have effective and meaningful contact with families.</li> <li>• The need for homes for older sibling groups and special needs children.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concurrent planning, including integrating adoption practices earlier in the case plan and appropriate training of foster parents to support reunification and permanency for children.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training for court staff on outcomes and accountability and on the impact on children's lives of failing to achieve permanence quickly.</li> <li>• Training on mediation as a tool in working to avoid contested hearings.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The support and collaboration with the Foster Parent Associations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislation mandating how quickly an appeals court would have to rule on an appeal. Even if the case is moving along quickly, if a parent appeals, the delay can be indefinite as there is nothing compelling a quick decision by that court.</li> </ul>